

SeaRead

Marine Park news from catchment to coral



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

Issue 13 • November/December 2006

What's inside

Review released by
Minister 2

World Heritage Area
reaches key milestone 3

Landmark agreement
signals strong future for
Green Corridor 4

Traditional Owners
celebrate marine resources
partnership 5

Mapping Indigenous
cultural heritage in the
Marine Park 6

Get your free Zoning
Maps 7

Help us learn more about
threats facing our marine
animals 10

Working with the
community to improve
our environment 11

Future leaders share
ideas at Eco Challenge 12

Special reef trips for Camp Quality kids



The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park came alive for more than 200 Camp Quality children and their families taking part in five special reef trips along the Queensland coast.

The trips were made possible thanks to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) donating \$15 000, the proceeds of the Eureka Prize for Biodiversity Research and employee fundraising.

GBRMPA Chairman Virginia Chadwick said the reef trips were enjoyable for everyone involved.

"We were pleased the proceeds of the Eureka Prize were put to good use and we're proud of our employees banding together to raise money in their own time for such a worthwhile cause," she said.

"The trips off Townsville, Cairns, Port Douglas, Airlie Beach and Yeppoon gave the children and their families a great opportunity to relax, swim, snorkel and enjoy the spectacular Marine Park.

"It was also an excellent way for our staff to share their knowledge of the Marine Park."

Virginia said the agency was grateful to tourism operators who assisted in hosting the trips.

"It was great to team up with tourism operators to enable more people to experience the Marine Park up-close," she said.

"We thank Fantasea Cruises, Passions of Paradise, Sunsea Cruises, Quicksilver and Freedom Fastcats for their role in hosting the trips."

Camp Quality's North Queensland Area Manager Lorraine Duve said the children and their families had a fun day out on the water.

The trips included visits to Norman Reef and Michaelmas Cay off Cairns, Orpheus Island off Townsville, Hardy Reef off Airlie Beach and Great Keppel Island off Yeppoon.

The Botanic Gardens Trust Eureka Prize for Biodiversity Research was awarded to the GBRMPA for outstanding contributions to the conservation of Australia's biodiversity through the Representative Areas Programme.

DISCLAIMER

While all efforts have been made to verify facts, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority takes no responsibility for the accuracy of information supplied in *SeaRead*.

© Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority 2006

Please note that you are welcome to photocopy *SeaRead*. However, if the text is reproduced separately, it must not be altered and must acknowledge the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority as the source. Illustrations must not be reused separately without permission. Please contact the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority if in doubt.

www.gbrmpa.gov.au

Message from the Chairman



the Hon Virginia Chadwick AO

As the year ends, it provides an opportunity to reflect and consider the many and varied activities that took place during the year and commend all those who played a role in helping protect the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. As in previous years, 2006 was not without its challenges but I am pleased with the direction of the Authority and the many staff who work tirelessly to keep the Great Barrier Reef great. This goal has underpinned all activities that took place during the year and will continue to be top of mind in 2007.

One of the most significant events this year was the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, releasing the review into the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*. I welcome the release of the review. Its recommendations confirmed the Authority's contribution to best environmental practice and has presented a clear

way forward. It allows for continuity in Marine Park management as well as some scope for expansion.

This year we also celebrated 25 years since the Great Barrier Reef was listed as a World Heritage Area. I am delighted that the area continues to be one of the most unique and best protected marine ecosystems in the world. Careful management, with the overriding goal of sustainable use, has gone a long way to preserving the area. I thank all staff, past and present, for their role in protecting the World Heritage Area over the last quarter century.

All this hard work pays off when we are able to see how much visitors enjoy their Marine Park experience. This was especially the case when the Authority recently teamed up with the tourism industry to host Camp Quality children and their families on trips to the reef. The trips were possible after the Authority donated

the proceeds of the Eureka Prize and employee fundraising. It was great to give something back to the community and even more pleasing, given we received the Eureka Prize for protecting the biodiversity of the area for the future, that we were able to share the Marine Park with the next generation.

I thank you for your continued support this year, and wish you and your family a safe and happy Christmas.

Regards

Virginia Chadwick
Chairman
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority

END

Review released by Minister

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon. Senator Ian Campbell, released the review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975.

The review was an Australian Government election commitment to review the Act to improve the performance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, its office holders and its accountability frameworks.

Senator Ian Campbell said the Government supported the review's recommendations. Importantly, these included:

- No alterations to the current zoning plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park for a minimum of seven years
- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority will continue to be based in Townsville and work closely with local communities and businesses

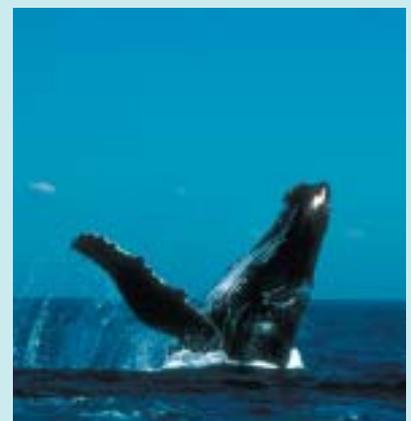
- The Great Barrier Reef Consultative Committee will be reconstituted as an Advisory Board reporting directly to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage
- An Outlook Report will be published every five years documenting the overall condition of the Marine Park, effectiveness of management and the risks and pressures on the ecosystem. The Report will be subject to peer review by an expert panel appointed by the Minister.

The review focused on updating the regulatory, governance and accountability frameworks and consultative mechanisms required for the long-term protection of the Great Barrier Reef, and the impact of the landmark *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

For a copy of the review report see www.deh.gov.au.

Input into whale and dolphin conservation

The Draft Operational Policy on Whale and Dolphin Conservation in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is available for public comment until 8 January 2007 at www.gbrmpa.gov.au.



END

World Heritage Area reaches key milestone

It has been a quarter of a century since one of Australia's most recognised natural icons achieved World Heritage status for its outstanding natural universal values on 26 October 1981.

World Heritage listing for the entire Great Barrier Reef was particularly significant as it was the first time a listing went beyond the bounds of an individual site and embraced an entire region.

Today the Great Barrier Reef remains one of only a few World Heritage properties that fulfil all four natural criteria.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Chairman Virginia Chadwick said she was extremely proud that the Great Barrier Reef had reached this significant milestone.

"As the largest World Heritage property anywhere in the world, this is particularly significant given the Great Barrier Reef remains one of the most resilient and thriving coral reef ecosystems on the planet," she said.

"The Australian Government, through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and the Queensland Government take a cooperative and integrated

approach to ensure that the area is protected for future generations."

Australia has sixteen World Heritage properties, with two of the five properties in Queensland including the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics.

Each World Heritage property is outstanding in its own right, representing a diversity of places and values that combine the best of natural and cultural heritage.

In 1981, the Great Barrier Reef was only one of a few World Heritage Areas on the globe that met all four natural criteria:

1. An outstanding example representing a major stage in the earth's evolutionary history
2. An outstanding example representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes
3. An example of unique, rare and superlative natural phenomena
4. Containing important and significant habitats for in situ conservation of biological diversity where rare and endangered species of plants and animals still survive.

Today just over 99 per cent of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is also within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The remainder is Queensland waters and Queensland islands.

To celebrate this important milestone, a commemorative insert has been included in this publication on page 8 to 9.

What's in a name?

Reef HQ will soon be seeking a name for the unique white turtle housed in the Aquarium.

The leucistic turtle, which was originally found by the Mackay Turtle Watch group on Black's Beach, has doubled in size since arriving at Reef HQ.

Leucism is caused by defective pigment cells and results in the turtle being completely white across both skin and shell.

As the turtle is nearly 12-months-old, staff at Reef HQ have decided to run a naming competition and are inviting all visitors to the Aquarium to lodge their suggestions.

Communication and Education Director Karen Vohland said staff had received many comments about the turtle not yet having an official name.

"In response to ongoing enquiries about the turtle, we have decided to run a naming competition during the Christmas school holidays," she said.

"We will shortly be releasing details regarding the competition and prizes on offer."

Anyone seeking further information regarding the naming competition should contact Reef HQ on (07) 4750 0800.

END

Summer brings flipped visitors to the beach



Turtles come ashore to nest at this time of the year

As summer approaches, our beaches may have some special night time visitors.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Species Conservation Manager Dr Kirstin Dobbs said female marine turtles would be returning to the areas of their birth to come ashore and nest.

"Most female turtles come ashore to lay eggs between October and February, laying about 120 eggs in a clutch," she said.

"The hatchlings then emerge from the nest seven to 12 weeks later, usually between December and May."

Six of the world's seven species of marine turtle live in the waters around Australia, and all six are found within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

"All of these species of turtles are protected species. This is one of the reasons why it is essential people take care when watching female turtles lay eggs or the hatchlings emerge from the sand and make their way to the ocean," Kirstin said.

Kirstin said human interaction with nesting turtles and hatchlings was not the only danger to turtles.

"Climate change is emerging as a new threat to marine turtles. Increased sand temperatures can alter

the sex ratios of turtles or even lead to mortality, while higher ocean temperatures can result in damage to turtle feeding habitats. A rise in sea level can also mean the loss of feeding and nesting habitats."

Kirstin said a number of best environmental practices for turtle watching had been developed to assist people to do the right thing when they are around turtles.

"People can also help protect turtles by not throwing any garbage including fishing line or plastic bags on the beach or in the ocean and by reducing their environmental footprint to help address climate change," she said.

For more information about marine turtles in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area see www.gbrmpa.gov.au or www.deh.gov.au/coasts/species/turtles.

END

Landmark agreement signals strong future for Green Corridor

Water quality in the Barron River and the Great Barrier Reef is set to receive a boost following a recent landmark Memorandum of Understanding.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) supported the Barron River Catchment Management Association in its goal of rejuvenating the Barron River along its entire length over the next 20 years, commencing with the highest priority areas.

GBRMPA Chairman Virginia Chadwick said the Green Corridor project was a significant partnership between landholders, community, government and industry.

"This project highlights the important connection between water quality in the Barron River and out on the Great Barrier Reef," she said.

"The key message of this partnership is our reliance on each other – the good health of our Reef relies on the good health of our local rivers and catchments."

Green Corridor Project Manager Kim Forde agreed, adding community involvement was crucial to the success of the programme.

"While the Green Corridor project is impressive due to its large-scale and whole-of-river

approach, I believe its key attribute is the engagement of the local community in the stewardship and sustainability of the Barron River."

As part of the agreement, the GBRMPA will commit to promotion of the Green Corridor Project for the next three years.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding was marked with an official ceremony and tree planting on the Barron River at Lower Freshwater Road, Freshwater.



To mark the occasion, Virginia plants a native tree, which will grow to about 30m in about 15 years

END

Nature gets helping hand on cane farm

An artificial wetland and revegetated riparian areas are just two of the innovative on-ground environmental projects by a Mackay cane farming couple.

Lawrence and Josie Bugeja are among a new generation of environmentally conscious landholders who understand the environmental and bottom-line benefits of best practice.

They were pleased to recently showcase their work to members of the Mackay Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) and students from Slade Point State School, a Reef Guardian School.

"I take the environment very seriously and have a deep desire to make a positive contribution through long-term sustainable changes," Lawrence said.

"I was overwhelmed with the amount of genuine support and interest from LMAC and the students in what we are doing on my farm."

Among the projects on their farm are water retention structures, levy

banks, grassed waterways, and the construction of two sediment retention structures.

These projects present significant benefits for the local environment, providing a natural water filtration system and enhancing the riverine habitat for platypus, turtles and birdlife.

The couple are also proponents of environmentally friendly practices such as cane trash blankets and alternative land uses like kenaf crop and an alpaca stud.

Chairman of the Mackay LMAC Rod Cunningham said the group would continue viewing the progressive environmental improvements on the farm.

"One of the most significant environmental problems effecting the reef and the waterways is water quality and the leadership and vision that Lawrence and Josie are providing will have a dramatic improvement in water quality," he said.

"Our LMAC will support this initiative in an effort to not only

prove it's effectiveness but to broadcast to the farming and greater community that it not only is a positive for the environment, but it can lead to a better financial return when combined with modern farming practices."

Rod said the LMAC were also in the final stages of developing its innovative "Adopt-A-Creek" programme, a way for the community to help improve water quality in streams and creeks through effective methods similar to those being utilised by Lawrence and Josie Bugeja.



Visitors inspect the environmental projects taking place on the farm

END

Traditional Owners celebrate marine resources partnership



Girringun Traditional Owners celebrate the Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement

Girringun Traditional Owners recently came together with Government representatives to celebrate the first accredited Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) in the Great Barrier Reef.

The agreement was developed by the Girringun Traditional Owners for their sea country between Rollingstone and Mission Beach and is specifically designed to ensure traditional use is ecologically-sustainable while still meeting Indigenous aspirations.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Chairman

Virginia Chadwick said such agreements were one of the key tools for developing productive working relations between Traditional Owner groups and government agencies.

"The fact it was simultaneously accredited by both the Authority Board and the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency is in itself important. As with zoning, it means the provisions apply in both the Commonwealth and State waters.

"The agreement goes a long way to demonstrating how government and Indigenous people can work together in the use, conservation and management of marine resources."

Virginia said the Girringun TUMRA has prompted other Traditional Owners to consider developing their own agreements.

"Agreements like this are the best possible way the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) can, along with our colleagues in

Queensland, work to develop real and effective sea country partnerships with Indigenous people along the Great Barrier Reef coast," she said.

"This way we can all work together to achieve the important dual objectives of threatened species conservation and more effective involvement in sea country management."

Chairperson for the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation John Andy said that by signing the agreement, they were taking steps to protect their traditional sea country for the future.

The members of six Girringun sea country groups (Djiru, Gulnay, Girramay, Bandjin, Warragamay and Nywaigi) worked to develop the agreement over the past two years.

The agreement is accredited until 2008 and will ensure cultural practices continue to co-exist with the conservation and management of the Great Barrier Reef.

Keep an eye out for **bleaching**

People venturing out in to the Great Barrier Reef this summer can help the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) monitor for signs of coral bleaching through the BleachWatch programme.

GBRMPA Director of Science, Technology and Information Services Dr Dave Wachenfeld said the BleachWatch programme assisted in identifying instances of coral bleaching throughout the length of the Great Barrier Reef.

"Detecting the early signs of a bleaching event needs a wide network of observers providing reports on conditions in their region," he said.

"Whether you are a tourism operator, researcher or student, recreational or commercial fisherman, or a casual user of the Marine Park, you can help us by reporting on the state of reefs you visit over the summer period.

"We are just as keen to receive reports of reefs that aren't experiencing any coral bleaching as we are to receive reports of bleaching.

"This enables us to gather a good reef-wide, spatial view of how this phenomenon is affecting the Great Barrier Reef."

Dave said it was now easier than ever to make a BleachWatch report online by simply going to GBRMPA's website at www.gbrmpa.gov.au and clicking on the BleachWatch icon.

"The online system also allows participants to run their own reports against the data they have provided to the GBRMPA."

Dave said the GBRMPA received a great response to the BleachWatch programme last summer with reports from 99 locations.

"It was BleachWatch participants who first alerted us to coral bleaching in the Southern Great Barrier Reef and this allowed us to closely monitor the area over the summer.

"Other BleachWatch participants were able to assist us by reporting reefs that remained relatively bleach-free."

Dave said BleachWatch workshops would be held during December in Port Douglas, Cairns, Townsville, Airlie Beach and Yeppoon.

"We encourage anyone wanting to become involved in BleachWatch to come along to one of the workshops."

BleachWatch is a community-based coral reef monitoring initiative developed by the GBRMPA and is an important part of GBRMPA's Climate Change Response Programme and Coral Bleaching Response Plan.

For details about how you can become involved in BleachWatch or to find out more about the BleachWatch workshops email bleachwatch@gbrmpa.gov.au or contact the BleachWatch Coordinator on (07) 4750 0700.

More information about coral bleaching is available at www.gbrmpa.gov.au.



Corals can survive bleaching events and regain their normal healthy colour once conditions improve

END



Mapping Indigenous cultural heritage in the Marine Park

A new sea country project sees the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit working with Traditional Owner groups to map their cultural and heritage values.

Unit Manager Chicka Turner said the Sea Country Cultural and Heritage Values Mapping Project had many benefits for the Marine Park and Indigenous Australians.

"The project assists Traditional Owners and the GBRMPA in achieving cooperative management of sea country, improving consideration of cultural and heritage values in future decision-making processes, and assisting with the development of Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements," Chicka said.

The mapping project aims to map and digitally record culturally important or traditional places, sacred sites, storylines, dreaming trails, as well as site names and currently used areas.

"We want to ensure activities around heritage sites and culturally important areas in the Marine Park are appropriately managed," Chicka said.

"The project will assist with species management issues, enhance the range of information available for sea country education projects about Traditional Owner values, and assist the process for dual non-Indigenous and Indigenous naming for reefs, bays and islands.

"Djiru sea country near Mission Beach is a great example of the value of cultural mapping for management.

"When the Djiru Traditional Owners advised the GBRMPA of the cultural and heritage values of Boat

Bay, GBRMPA incorporated this information when developing the Clump Point Site Management Arrangements."

For more information on the Sea Country Cultural and Heritage Values Mapping project, contact the Indigenous Partnerships Liaison Unit on (07) 4750 0700 or email indigenous_partnerships@gbmpa.gov.au.

END



Djiru Traditional Owner John Andy advises the GBRMPA staff about the cultural and heritage value of Boat Bay

Sea Country Snippets

Introducing Traditional Owner groups along the Great Barrier Reef coast



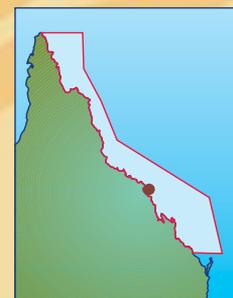
Lama Lama (Pronounced Lumma Lumma)

- Lama Lama is the language name for Traditional Owners of the Princess Charlotte Bay region
- The Lama Lama people were once known for their trade with Torres Strait Islanders and with southern inland groups
- The double outrigger canoes used by the Lama Lama were introduced from the Torres Strait and enabled travel over long distances in open sea
- Lama Lama Traditional Owners are currently pursuing sea country tourism, outstation development and community rangers at Port Stewart.



Ngaro (Pronounced Naar-oh)

- Ngaro are the Traditional Owners of the Whitsunday Islands region
- Ngaro women were active collectors of shellfish and the men were known for their navigation skills in outrigger canoes among the islands
- Many Aboriginal cultural heritage sites exist within the Ngaro sea country including numerous fish traps and rock art at Nara Inlet and Hook Island
- A nationally significant stone tool quarry exists on South Molle Island from which stone tools were traded as far away as central Australia.



END

Remember to brush up on zoning for Christmas holidays

With the start of the Christmas holidays, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is reminding boaties to brush up on zoning before heading out on the water.

GBRMPA Operations Director Mick Bishop said there were a number of Australian and Queensland Government agencies patrolling the Marine Park.

"We are expecting a busy time on the water over the Christmas holidays and urge boaties and anglers to consult free zoning maps and take their free map with them," he said.

On the water there are GBRMPA inspectors in the following agencies: Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, Customs National Marine Unit, Queensland Water Police, and the GBRMPA.

Coastwatch also provide aerial surveillance along the entire length of the Marine Park.

Mick said it was important for boaties and anglers to familiarise themselves with the legislation and the different guidelines governing Green, Yellow and Blue Zones.

"The zones help to protect the biodiversity and ecology of the Great Barrier Reef and surrounding marine ecosystems. Strong penalties apply for breaches to Marine Park legislation," he said.

"We want everyone to have a great time so make sure you know where you can go and what you can do and take care when out on the water."

Free zoning guides and maps are widely available from bait and tackle shops, visitor information centres, ship chandlers and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol offices.

Alternatively boaties can contact the GBRMPA on 1800 990 177 for a free map.

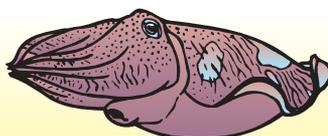


Get your free Zoning Map so you have a safe and fun time out on the water

END

Interesting Facts

Cuttlefish only live for 18 months - this is due to their unusual circulatory system that includes three hearts and copper, rather than iron, based green blood. The system requires so much energy the cuttlefish literally wears out.



Imported raw prawns could kill our precious marine life



Next time you thread a raw prawn onto a fishing hook, think twice - you might be unwittingly putting the Great Barrier Reef's fragile and unique biodiversity at risk.

Imported green prawns should not be used as bait or berley in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park - they have a risk of introducing exotic viruses into the marine ecosystem that could have an adverse effect on Great Barrier Reef marine life.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Executive Director John Tanzer said imported green prawns could carry exotic viruses, such as the white spot syndrome virus, that were not dangerous for human consumption but had the potential to be transferred to Australian stocks of prawns and crabs.

"If you're unsure what baits to use, follow the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries guidelines, read raw seafood labels carefully, and avoid the use of imported green (uncooked) prawns as bait or berley in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park," he said.

"The GBRMPA supports the concerns of the fishing industry and are keen to minimise the potential threat this poses to Queensland's multi-million dollar prawn and crab fisheries."

The transmission of disease is a serious national issue, with Biosecurity Australia currently leading a whole-of-government review of the policy and processes for importing green (uncooked) prawns.

The GBRMPA is contributing to this review and, at the same time, promoting best practice approaches to ensure everyone can help maintain the health of the Great Barrier Reef ecosystem.

"We want people to enjoy fishing in the Marine Park and encourage everyone to make sure they have their zoning maps and only use locally caught prawns as bait," John said.

END

Help us learn more about threats facing our marine animals

Did you know your reports to the EPA Hotline about incidents involving marine animal are compiled into annual reports? These reports are used by management agencies to learn more about threats affecting marine mammals and turtles in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The main source of knowledge about human-related factors affecting marine animals comes from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) StrandNet database of marine wildlife strandings and death. StrandNet shows when marine animals deaths occur due to human causes.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Species Conservation Officer Rachel Pears said this knowledge was used to improve management actions that helped conserve our marine mammals and turtles.

"This database provides us with important information about whales, dolphins, turtles and dugongs, as well as the types of impacts affecting them," Rachel said.

"Some of the management actions we have been able to identify from the database include hotspots for boat strikes where go slow areas could be introduced and issues associated with turtles drowning in crab pots.

"This lead to discussions with the Queensland Fisheries Crab Management Advisory Committee about the opening sizes of the pots, as well as the identification of pollutants in dugongs leading to actions under the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

"The database also provides information about the effectiveness of some management strategies like zoning, Dugong Protection Areas and Turtle Excluder Devices, while helping us to monitor and identify new and emerging issues facing these species."

Rachel said the EPA Hotline played an important part in rescuing marine wildlife and an integral part of our information gathering about causes of injuries or death to marine wildlife.

END



Human-related activities can impact on marine animals

Please report all sick, injured, stranded or dead whales, dolphins, turtles, dugongs and other marine wildlife to the EPA Hotline on 1300 130 372.

Access the EPA's annual marine stranding reports at www.epa.qld.gov.au/nature_conservation/wildlife/caring_for_wildlife/marine_strandings/

To become a member of GBRMPA's Public Stranding Listserver and receive email updates of responses reported to the EPA Hotline and other species related information go to www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/stranding_announce

Special reef trips for Camp Quality kids



GBRMPA's Dave Lowe joined families in the Keppel Islands



A helicopter flight over the reef was part of the Cairns trip



GBRMPA's Doon McColl accompanies parents and children in Cairns



The Fantasea mascot



The Sunsea Cruises vessel docks at the Orpheus Island jetty

END



Working with the community to **improve** our environment

Students and teachers from Beaconsfield State School in Mackay are working with community groups to revegetate a parcel of land close to their school.

The Mackay Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC), Mackay City Council and Pioneer Catchment and Landcare Group are helping the Reef Guardian School to remove weeds, create a wetland and provide a corridor to join two rainforest areas.

Mackay City Council's Natural Environment Officer Stuart Fyfe has been assisting the group.

Although the project had only been running since June this year, he said the teachers and students had been making real progress.

"So far we have fenced off an area to reduce the impact of cattle, conducted weed control, planted over 200 seedlings, conducted rubbish

clean-ups, planted sedges along the adjacent drain and conducted on-ground maintenance of the revegetation site," Stuart said.

"The school's future plans are to move the fence further along to cordon off more of the land from the cattle.

"We will soon erect a sign on the land that recognises the efforts of Beaconsfield State School and the partner agencies involved in the project."

Mackay LMAC Member John Formosa recently presented the students with a cheque to assist them with their project.

John said the environmental work they were doing in the school grounds and the community was very encouraging.

"The students are planning to put the money towards buying more

plants for their revegetation project and the 'Future Forest Project' they have begun within their school grounds," he said.

The Pioneer Catchment and Landcare Group has also been assisting in the revegetation process and has donated a large amount of native seedlings to the school

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Education Manager Fred Nucifora said it was great to see a Reef Guardian School working with their local community to better the environment.

"This is exactly what we want to see Reef Guardian Schools doing, getting out in the community, forming partnerships and working together to achieve a common goal. Beaconsfield State School are doing a great job and achieving fantastic results," he said.

END

Rods, reels and hooks replace desks, pencils and books

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) staff recently attended the Cranbrook State School Fishing Classic at Pallarenda to teach students and teachers the importance of sustainable fishing practices.

GBRMPA's Reef Guardian Schools Programme Manager Megan Sperring said Cranbrook State School only recently joined the Reef Guardian Schools programme yet were already displaying excellence in environmental management.

"The year five to seven Fishing Classic gave us the opportunity to show students that learning about zoning within the Marine Park and responsible fishing practices can be fun and interesting. We had lots of great activities ready for them," Megan said.

Cranbrook State School Teacher Margaret Peasley said the Fishing Classic was a great day for the students as it allowed them to participate in a fun leisure activity whilst also teaching them important fishing practices.

"We like to provide a range of practical activities for students to engage in that may benefit them in the future," Margaret said.

"As we live right along side the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park we are encouraging students to get outside and enjoy what is in their own backyard.

"Not only are the students participating in practical activities about the Reef but they are also learning all about the management of the Reef and the plants and animals within it.

"We received great community support for the event, local Townsville business Pro Tackle provided hand lines and Bremer Bait supplied frozen bait for the day. Mr and Mrs Gary Williams, parents of the school, donated 10 tackle boxes filled with fishing gear as prizes for the day."



Future leaders share ideas at **Eco Challenge**

Students from schools throughout Townsville and Thuringowa gathered recently to participate in the Future Leaders Eco Challenge facilitated by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Townsville City Council.

GBRMPA's Education Manager Fred Nucifora said the aim of the challenge was to focus on the theme Sustainable Living, Sustainable Environments, Sustainable Futures.

"The students had the opportunity to share stories and experiences with one another, learn from one another, as well as network, problem solve and plan for the future," Fred said.

The Future Leaders Congress has been run by the GBRMPA in collaboration with the Townsville City Council, Creek-to-Coral and other natural resource management agencies for the past five years, focussing on a different theme each year.

This year 46 students and 11 teachers participated in the congress.

Fred said he was amazed at the ideas the students had presented in the past and the care they showed for their environment and its sustainability.

"What we hope to achieve from each Eco Challenge is seeing students actively living sustainably, we don't just want to talk about it, we want to empower them to do it," he said.

"Students are also encouraged to spread their environmental messages to a wider audience - their community, their towns and their regions."

Townsville City Council Deputy Mayor Ann Bunnell said she hoped the Eco Challenge helped to break down the obstacles students may face when adopting sustainable behaviours in their schools and community.

"During the day the students were encouraged to have fun working together to develop action plans and set achievable goals for their schools to exist sustainably," she said.



Left to right: Townsville Marine Advisory Committee Chair Steve McGuire, Creek to Coral Coordinator DJ Mackenzie and GBRMPA's Megan Sperring, Duncan Forster and Fred Nucifora with students from Belgian Gardens State School



School holiday fun at Reef HQ



Reef HQ Aquarium recently celebrated the September school holidays with '3D under the sea' - an art exhibition with a difference.

Five schools and learning centres throughout Townsville and the Burdekin submitted creative 3D artworks with a reef theme with the winning pieces of artwork receiving prizes valued at \$1500.

Visitors to Reef HQ Aquarium also had the chance to pick their favourite artwork for the viewers choice award and enter into the draw to win a framed Reef print.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Education Manager Fred Nucifora said he was extremely impressed with the artwork that made its way through the doors and could see the hard work the students had put into their work.

"The basis of the art competition was to give students an opportunity to express themselves and their interest in the reef via a different sort of creative outlet," Fred said.

"There were amazing colourful fish made out of recycled drink bottles, a wetland ecosystem built into a fish tank and a sea star made out of coloured cotton wool balls. The longer you looked at the artwork the more you found."

Artwork submitted included; 'Coral Reef in Danger' (Hermit Park State School), 'The Coral Bed' (Kirwan State High School), 'Yongala's Treasures' (Clare State School), 'Hiding Harlequins' (Clare State School), 'Ecosystem of a wetland' (Burdekin Christian College), 'Recycle for the Reef' (Townsville Community Learning Centre).

The exhibition was made possible through the support of the Townsville City Council and Creek to Coral.

The winner of the viewers choice award was the Townsville Community Learning Centre for their 'Recycle for the Reef'.



END

World-class arrangements for the Reef's most sustainable fishery



The Queensland coral fishery now has world-class management arrangements.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) Fisheries Project Manager Margie Atkinson said the restructure was four years in the making and represented a significant collaborative effort between management – Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, the GBRMPA and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service – and industry.

"It may come as a surprise that there is a fishery for coral as most people do not think of coral as a fish," Margie said.

"Most of the coral taken from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park goes to the aquarium industry."

"While there are hundreds of kinds of coral, many do not 'build reefs' and some are found most

commonly off the reef in sediment flats – these are generally the ones that are targeted by the fishery."

"More than half of the coral taken in the fishery is hand-collected, loose chunks of coral rock (live rock) which is used to provide filtration and structure in tropical marine aquariums."

Recent independent reports have demonstrated the amount that is allowed to be taken in this fishery does not raise any questions of ecological sustainability across the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

"Corals are hand-picked, so unlike most fisheries there is no bycatch and only perhaps one in every six pieces of coral at any location meets the selection requirements of being small and beautiful," Margie said.

The new arrangements will achieve good conservation outcomes by allowing access to the habitats where the target corals are most common and other people generally do not go.

The arrangements also include rigorous reporting and compliance rules, limits to the take of some types of corals and will provide strategies to ensure effective spatial management.

The new arrangements in combination with the current levels of 'no-take' zones means that this will be the most ecologically sustainable fishery in the Great Barrier Reef.

Any removal of coral (alive or dead) from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park requires both a State and Commonwealth permit.

END

Reef HQ volunteers fly tourism flag

The dedicated volunteers of Reef HQ Aquarium have once again been recognised for their dedication - this time at the 2006 North Queensland Tourism Awards.

The volunteers were successful in winning the Visitor Enhancement Services category and were presented with their certificate at a gala awards dinner held at Townsville Port.

Reef HQ Interpretation and Volunteer Manager Julie Spencer said the award was an honour to all volunteers in the programme.

"The volunteers were incredibly proud to receive the award this year. It is confirmation of the important contribution our volunteers make to improving the experience of each visitor to the Aquarium."

Julie accepted the award with volunteer representative Tracey Von Hoff at the event.

The awards are presented annually and cover tourism operations between Bowen, Charters Towers and Mission Beach.



END

Sharing science with the community

The first Science in the Community forums recently hit the road in Mission Beach, Mackay and Airlie Beach.

The forums, organised by the Local Marine Advisory Committees, aimed to help communities understand the research undertaken in the Marine Park and how this science was used to shape management actions.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Community Partnerships Group Director Dr Leanne Fernandes said the events generated a lot of positive feedback.

"The first forums, which were on the real implications of climate change and coral bleaching for the Great Barrier Reef, were held in three

centres along the coast and were very well-received by community members," she said.

"It is important all community members - whether it be commercial operators in the Marine Park, recreational users or those who just like to know what is going on in their in back yard - have an opportunity to hear about the research and the science behind the management decisions."

Upcoming community forums, on zoning-related matters and research, are taking place in Rockhampton. For more information please contact the Community Partnerships Group on (07) 4750 0700.

END

Proposed changes

The community will soon be invited to have a say on proposed amendments to the Cairns Area and Whitsundays Plans of Management.

Plans of Management complement zoning by addressing issues specific to an area, species or community in greater detail than can be accomplished by the broader reef-wide zoning plans. The amendments do not address zoning in the area.

Public consultation information will be released early next year. It will then be available online at www.gbrmpa.gov.au under "Latest News."

Talking tourism at conference

Townsville and Reef HQ recently played host to Ecotourism Australia's 2006 International Conference.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRPMA) Chairman Virginia Chadwick gave a keynote address to delegates on tourism's role in the Marine Park.

The address highlighted the linkages between the Great Barrier Reef, local communities and surrounding landscapes.

"The conference provided a valuable opportunity to address delegates from all over the world on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's partnership with the tourism industry and in particular the success of our High Standard Tourism Programme," she said.

"Tourism is the most significant industry in the Marine Park, with over 1.9 million visitors using a tourism operator to experience the Reef each year."

Virginia said the GBRMPA now recognised 30 high standard operations from large-scale pontoon-based experiences to smaller live aboard operations and low-key kayaking adventures.

"All our high standard operators are committed to following best practices and operating sustainably in the Marine Park and they are all EcoCertified by Ecotourism Australia," Virginia said.

As part of the conference, delegates participated in regional workshops, including one hosted by the GBRMPA on the impacts of climate change.

Approximately 80 delegates took the opportunity to visit Magnetic Island to learn about this important topic and to drop in to Reef HQ for a special visit.

Interesting Facts

Jellyfish are not fish – they are invertebrates, which means they do not have a backbone. A jellyfish is made up of 95 per cent water.



New boat to boost compliance activities

North Keppel Island played host to about 150 people recently for the launch of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service boat the Woppaburra.

The *Woppaburra* represents a joint effort of the Australian and Queensland Governments (through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS)) and will be based out of Rosslyn Bay.

QPWS District Manager Dave Orgill said when choosing a name for the boat they wanted something that would reflect some of the living culture of the local Traditional Owners, the Woppaburra people.

"Woppaburra is the culturally collective term for 'islands, sea and people' and the name has strong Traditional Owner connections to the area where the new boat will operate," he said.

"Traditional Owner Bob Muir, with the help of Darambal elder and QPWS Ranger Uncle Bill Mann, performed a smoking ceremony for the new boat and her crew.

"This means that the *Woppaburra* and her crew will operate with the blessing of the Traditional Owners."

GBRMPA Executive Director John Tanzer said the new boat would

improve surveillance and enforcement in Keppel Bay, Shoalwater Bay and the Broad Sound Groups between Rockhampton and Mackay.

"The *Woppaburra* has been fitted with state-of-the-art navigation, communication and radar systems and its modern design will provide significant savings."

Guests included Senator Ian Macdonald, Queensland MLA Paul Hoolihan, Deputy Mayor Brian Dorey of Livingstone Shire Council, Traditional Owners Bob Muir and Chrissy Doherty, GBRMPA Executive Director John Tanzer and QPWS Central Region Director Keith Twyford.



Senator Ian Macdonald, Queensland local member Paul Hoolihan, Traditional Owners Bob Muir and Chrissy Doherty pouring water from the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area over the *Woppaburra* to officially launch it

END

Reef listed as one of Queensland's top icons

One of Queensland's top icons is at our doorstep, according to an announcement made recently by the National Trust of Queensland.

The Trust named the Great Barrier Reef as one of the top 12 quintessential symbols of Queensland at a ceremony at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Chairman Virginia Chadwick welcomed the announcement.

"The Great Barrier Reef is an incredibly diverse and important marine ecosystem and we welcome its listing as one of Queensland's top icons," she said.

"The reef is internationally-renowned for its amazing marine life and as an example of best practice

environmental management to ensure it is used sustainably.

"We hope the listing will raise even more environmental awareness about the reef, why it is special and why it should be protected for future generations."

Some 2900 reefs make up the Great Barrier Reef, which is approximately 2300 kilometres long and extends from the northern tip of Queensland south to just north of Bundaberg.

It is home to approximately 1500 species of fish, 360 species of hard coral and one-third of the world's soft corals.

During 2004 the National Trust of Queensland invited the people of Queensland to nominate a favourite Queensland icon for inclusion in the initial list of Queensland Heritage Icons.

The plan is to add another 12 items, thus building for all time a comprehensive list of familiar items of significance in the cultural history of Queensland.

END

Marine Park Partnerships

Profile of Regional Liaison Manager – Far Northern



Doon McColl

Doon McColl joined the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) as Regional Liaison Manager for the Far Northern Region last month.

Formerly a newspaper journalist, Doon spent 10 years working for GBRMPA's World Heritage neighbour, the Wet Tropics Management Authority.

For the past year she worked in tourism as a private consultant and project coordinator at Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

Doon describes her new position as her dream job "even though I'm not a marine biologist!"

"I confess I'm a people person and my focus is firmly on the people who make up our stakeholder groups, local councils and our regional community," she said.

"Here in tropical north Queensland the reef is part of our landscape, our quality of life, and part of who we are here.

"It's time to build on that sense of community ownership and work together to make sure the next generation of north Queenslanders get to enjoy it as much as we do."

Doon feels the biggest threat to the reef is global climate change, but says the problem doesn't belong in the "too hard" basket.

"Call me a blind optimist, but I truly believe that humans are capable of slowing down climate change - it will just take some collaborative effort."

Doon's region stretches from Mission Beach in the south to Cape Tribulation in the north, and she is keen to hear from residents and community groups who'd like to discuss reef issues.

She can be contacted on (07) 4051 7132 or via email d.mccoll@gbmpa.gov.au.

Creature Feature

Featherstar

Family *Comasteridae*

Class *Crinoidea*

- Feather stars, or crinoids, are among the most beautiful of reef creatures.
- The arms of a feather star are greatly divided and extend into the water and so they look quite different from sea stars and other echinoderms.
- Feather stars can be found sitting on sea fans or in areas of high current.
- Feather stars are nocturnal plankton feeders. They do not move around very much but find a position on the reef where currents bring small animals that they filter through the net of their arms. The mouth of a feather star is located on top of its body.



Doing your bit to look after it!

Frequent anchoring at popular sites can destroy fragile corals. To help protect coral there are public moorings at many frequently visited sites. It is mandatory to comply with designated no anchoring areas in the Marine Park and coral must not be damaged or removed. In the Cairns and Hinchinbrook areas there are specific requirements for anchoring vessels longer than 35 metres and in the Cairns Area anchoring usually must be 50 metres from a mooring and 200 metres from a pontoon.

- Examine the area before anchoring to find the best location
- Anchor in sand or mud away from coral
- Carry enough chain and line for the depth you want to anchor in
- Use the correct anchor for your situation and environment
- Use only as much chain as you need to hold the vessel, without compromising safety
- Keep watch to make sure the anchor isn't dragging
- Motor towards the anchor when hauling it in
- Use public moorings where available
- When picking up a mooring:
 - Motor into the wind toward the buoy
 - Avoid running over the pick-up line
 - Use a boat hook to retrieve the pick-up line
 - Attach the line to a strong point or bollard on the vessel
- When using a public mooring, read and follow the advice given on an information disc attached to the pick-up line
- Vacate a public mooring as soon as you can to allow access for others.

Community Links

A profile of **Lux Foot**

Coordinator of Bushland Beach
Seagrass Watch team



Lux Foot has been involved in the Seagrass Watch programme for four years and says he will stay with the programme for as long as he can manage to get out there and monitor seagrass.

The 69-year-old retired nursery worker became involved in Seagrass Watch through his involvement with the Rotary Club.

He says he enjoys the volunteer work as it allows him to use his background in horticulture and he is interested in learning about different plant environments.

"I love learning about new things and the marine environment is very interesting. Seagrass is a very important part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park," Lux said.

Lux says the seagrass area at Bushland Beach, where he is the coordinator of the seagrass watch team, has expanded over the years.

"We now walk through about 200 metres of seagrass to reach the area where we monitor."

In November 2005, Lux accompanied the Seagrass Watch team to Thursday Island to help monitor seagrass in the region.

"It was very interesting as some areas of seagrass in Thursday Island are very different to what we have here."

Lux was born in Townsville, and having lived in the region all his life, says he loves the north because of the lifestyle, climate, friendly people and his regular trips to Ingham to go fishing with his mates.

Minister recognises strong partnerships

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's (GBRMPA) Tourism and Recreation group were recently awarded the Minister's Achievement Award for Fostering Partnerships with the Tourism Industry to Deliver Environmental Outcomes.

When presenting the award the Australian Minister for Environment and Heritage, the Hon. Senator Ian Campbell praised GBRMPA's work.

He said management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park was the best in the world and the GBRMPA was recognised in Australia and internationally as the world leader for marine protected area management.

The Minister went on to say the work of the GBRMPA Tourism and Recreation group set a best practice standard for how government and industry can work together to deliver good environmental and economic outcomes for Australia.

Calendar of events

06 – 12 November 2006

National Recycling Week

08 November 2006

Mission Beach LMAC meeting

05 December 2006

International Volunteer Day

05 – 12 December 2006

Coastcare Week

07 December 2006

Capricorn Coast LMAC meeting

13 December 2006

Cairns LMAC meeting

19 December 2006

Mackay LMAC meeting

25 December 2006

Christmas Day

25 Dec 2006 – 2 Jan 2007

GBRMPA offices closed

GBRMPA contacts

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
2-68 Flinders Street
PO Box 1379
Townsville Qld 4810

Phone: (07) 4750 0700
Fax: (07) 4772 6093
Email: info@gbrmpa.gov.au

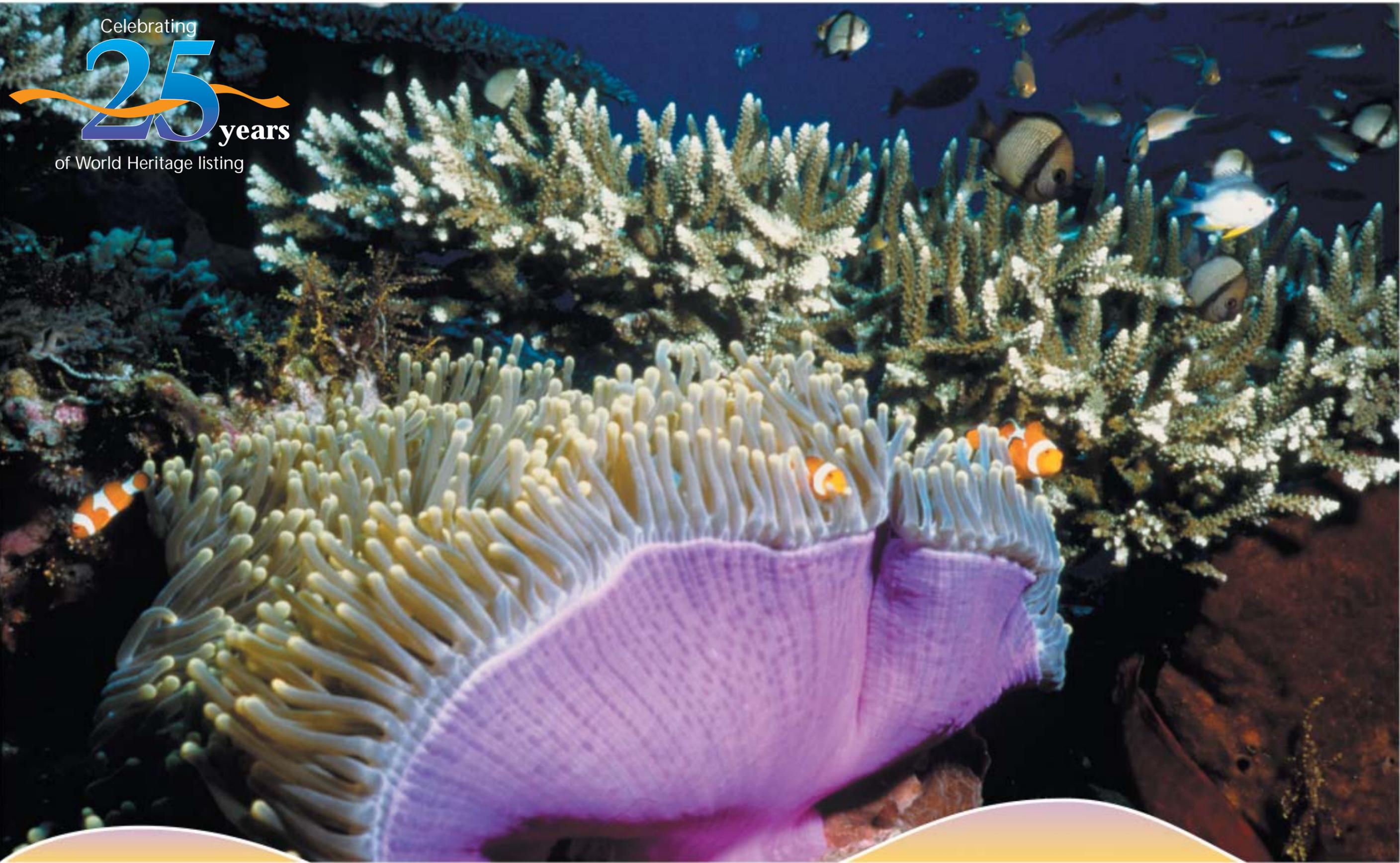
If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in the future or if you would like to receive this newsletter via email instead of as a hard copy, please email searead@gbrmpa.gov.au or phone the GBRMPA on (07) 4750 0700.



Australian Government
Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority



Natural
Heritage
Trust
Helping Communities
Helping Australia
An Australian Government Initiative



Celebrating
25 years
of World Heritage listing

The Great Barrier Reef is home to unique and diverse plants and animals – this is why the area is special and needs protecting for the future.